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ABSTRACT

Four aspects of the process of an individual's socialization into a new organization are examined: characteristics, stages, content, and practice. Socialization is defined as the process by which an individual comes to appreciate the values, abilities, expected behaviors, and social knowledge essential for assuming an organizational role and for participating as an organizational member. Characteristics of the process include disorientation, embarrassment, fear of stupidity, sensory overload, and reality shock. The stages of socialization are anticipatory socialization, the encounter stage, and the adaptation stage. There are three content areas of socialization activity: (1) adjusting to the work environment; (2) developing work skills; and (3) understanding the culture and values of the organizational setting. With regard to socialization practices, there are three key features of the newcomer's experience. He has to adjust to change from a previous job, experience contrast with the previous job, and deal with the surprise element, i.e., the difference between expectations and subsequent experience. To facilitate socialization, the newcomer should be provided support and help to deal with any surprises. (RM)

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SOCIALISATION INTO ORGANISATIONS

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SOCIALISATION INTO ORGANISATIONS

1. When an individual takes a post in a new organisation, he starts from a position of almost total ignorance. He does not know very much about what the job will involve, what it is like working in that particular organisation, how the staff behave to each other. He does not know about the rituals, the special ways of doing things, what goes on in various locations, which people belong to which groups. A year later, he will know all of this and be a part of it. In those twelve months, a great deal of very rapid learning has taken place. This process of learning is termed socialisation.

2. Socialisation has been defined as "the process by which an individual comes to appreciate the values, abilities, expected behaviours and social knowledge essential for assuming an organisational role and for participating as an organisational member." (Louis, 1980). Similar definitions and outlines of socialisation can be found in Brim (1966), Van Maanen (1976), Van Maanen and Schein (1979), and Porter, Lawler and Hackman (1975). The process is a complex one, and although the end result is easy enough to examine, the way in which it all happens is complex enough to make examination of it difficult. In order to make analysis easier, we will examine it in four different aspects: - its characteristics, stages, content, and practise.

3. Characteristics of Socialisation
 The process is about coming to an understanding of things which initially are totally unknown, but which from the first day of arrival, one needs to know about. So not surprisingly a major experience is likely to be one of disorientation, and foreignness accompanied by feelings of embarrassment and apprehension of stupidity that one may say or do the wrong thing. At first the newcomer is very much in the dark. He has no kind of map of time and space in the new organisation, although he is aware that the map is available to everyone else. They know what goes on where, the boundaries and demarcations, what will be going on at various times during the day, and the activities that punctuate the time span. There is so much that is new that recruits will generally experience a sensory overload, which they can only deal with by trying to make sense of a limited number of stimuli, while aware of much else that they do not understand but must temporarily ignore. Coming face to face with the activities, expectations, rituals, values, time and space arrangements, groupings, boundaries - in fact, the whole organisation and culture of the new institution - creates a condition in the individual that Hughes (1958) describes as reality shock. Whatever simple and comfortable ideas with

which we came through the door, this total confusion that we face is the world in which we are going to take our place and of which we need to make some kind of sense and order.

4. The Stages of Socialisation

There have been a number of attempts to list the stages of socialisation. One general approach is the following.

Stage One. Anticipatory Socialisation. The term was first used by Merton (1968), and refers to the common phenomenon that people will have some ideas about the job they are going to do and the nature of the place in which they will do it, before they even acquire a job. They will probably have inwardly projected themselves into imagined situations and rehearsed some of their behaviours. In the case of very visible occupations, such as teaching or nursing, there may be a strong if inaccurate popular conception as to how such people behave in their jobs. Furthermore in the case of teaching most entrants will have been pupils and students in the past, and carried forward some role image of the teacher. For most teachers in schools, there is a lengthy period of role preparation in training institutions which not only teach job-related skills, but also begin to socialise student teachers into the behaviours appropriate to the institutions in which they will work. Insofar as by various means expectations are built up at this stage, they may well be unrealistic or inaccurate. This phase is sometimes referred to as the Pre-Arrival Stage.

Stage Two. The Encounter Stage. The point of reality shock, the initial meeting of reality and its relationship to expectation, is an experience which is critical in determining the long-term response of the individual to the organisation.

Stage Three. The Adaptation Stage. The newcomer gradually transposes into the insider. At first he is simply learning what is there, beginning to make a map in his mind of the organisation, and becoming familiar with the range of expected behaviours. But his insider status is reinforced at various times by such confirmations as being given responsibilities, being made privy to privileged information, being asked for advice, and becoming part of some informal networks.

Another categorisation of stages is that of Davis (1968), which rose out of his study of nursing entrants. He suggests that on entry nurses are in a state of initial innocence, often with idealised conceptions of what nursing life is like. Very quickly they face Reality Shock as they discover in various ways that life is very different, and that nurses do not behave behind the scenes as they had expected. Davis describes this stage as a gross misalignment between their initial

expectations and those that their senior colleagues direct at them. There follows a period termed Psyching Out in which the novice nurses begin the process of divining what it is that is expected of them and of how best to go about satisfying such expectations, thus essaying a rudimentary cognitive framework on which later internalisation can build. At the same time they begin to practice Role Simulation, in which in a highly self-conscious manner they practice performances which they begin to recognise as those valued by the institution. At this stage because there is a degree of manipulation or play-acting in one's public behaviour, many nurses have feelings of guilt and hypocrisy. Davis suggests that for the nurses he observed, these processes were completed in about 12 months. After this there follows a more or less imperceptible and continuous transition through Provisional Internalisation of institutionally approved perspectives to Stable Internalisation. These stages need to be separated, because in the former there are recurrent failures by the nurses to integrate the cognitions, percepts and role orientations which she has now recognised as part of the business of being a nurse. As these failures become less frequent and as the nurse becomes more at ease with her professional rhetoric, so she builds up a clear reference model of the nurse-role which she accepts for herself.

There is one criticism that can be made of nearly all categorisations of stages. They are concerned only with socialisation into, not socialisation away from. They all but ignore the values, abilities, expected behaviours and social knowledge, which the individual had internalised in his previous job. The process is one of letting go and unlearning, as well as taking on and learning. In fact the process of letting go of past certainties and experiences is a potentially difficult one to which little attention has been paid in writings on socialisation. The problems of the teacher letting go of his classroom behaviour and peer relationships to take on the management behaviour and supervisory relationships of the Head of Department, are well known to common experience. We could well adapt the work of anthropologists on leave-taking and transition rituals (Van Gennep, 1960, Turner, 1969), and the work of social psychologists studying 'letting go' in group behaviour (Tannenbaum, 1976) in order to find insights into the nature of the process.

5. The Content of Socialisation

There are three areas of socialisation activity.

1. Adjustment to the work environment.
2. Development of work skills.
3. Culture and values of the organisation setting.

The first two of these are really concerned with role-related learning. They concern the capacity of the new member to

understand what is involved in being in that particular job. Some of it will be generalised across any organisation he might be employed in. The role of a teacher has certain common behavioural expectations wherever he is operating, and these have to be learnt. Other behaviours are related to the particular institution, identifying how it likes its teachers to interpret their occupational role. Fieldman (1976) has suggested that in terms of work role, the newcomer has to work through a number of processes, and critical to Encounter and Adaptation phrases are:

1. Initiation to the task - how well does he come to be seen as a competent working member, satisfying the demands of the job?
2. Initiation to the group - to what extent is he accepted and trusted by co-workers?
3. Role definition - how far has he become clear what his tasks are, and what priorities and time allocations are required?
4. Congruence of evaluation - to what extent does his own and his supervisor's (or co-workers') evaluation of his work and progress agree?
5. Resolution of outside life conflicts - how well does he come to terms with home life and work conflicts, and find rules for dealing with them?
6. Resolution of conflicting demands - to what extent does he come to terms with conflicts between groups and people at work, and find rules for dealing with them?

Rather more attention has been paid to how the recruit comes to terms with his work-role than to the culture of the organisation. Culture is a term of common coinage, but is not easy to define. Most commonly, writers have concentrated on central functions of symbol in culture. It is defined as "everything that is produced by and is capable of sustaining shared symbolic experience" (Jaeger and Selsnick, 1964), and "an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols" (Geertz, 1975). An organisation, such as a college, or any of its sections has a distinct culture of collectively shared assumptions concerned with activities, aims, values and membership. Newcomers have to perceive what this culture is. In order to make sense of, and become a part of, what is going on around them, they have to understand, share and work with the symbols common to the culture of their part of the organisation.

6. Characteristics of Socialisation Practices

There has been some investigation into the structural arrangements that can be used in organisations to facilitate the socialisation process. Such work has not been concerned with details of specific

programmes but the general characteristics common across organisations. Wheeler (1966) has examined the effects of two structures:

- Individual as against collective socialisation
- Serial as against disjunctive socialisation

By this latter, he meant the availability or not of help for the newcomer from people previously in the role. The most thorough investigation of structural practices has been by Van Maanen and Schein (1979) who used Wheeler's two dimensions and added four of their own, using these six to analyse socialisation practices and outcomes. The four dimensions they added were:

- Formal as against Informal socialisation
- Sequential as against Variable socialisation
- Fixed as against variable socialisation
- Investiture as against Disvestiture

By this last dimension, they meant the learning of new behaviours or attitudes, as distinct from unlearning old behaviours and attitudes.

What is not dealt with in this body of work is the internal process of the newcomer, and the way in which he is affected in various ways by different structures. The following section looks at the internal choices, dilemmas and experiences of the newcomer, using a model proposed by Louis (1980).

7. Key Characteristics of the Newcomer's Experience

What is it that the newcomer has to cope with? There are invariably three key features of his experience.

Change. He has to adjust to change from his previous job. The change may of course be highly desired by him, and it might provide him with many improvements in his conditions. Nevertheless he has to learn to cope with changes for the good as much as changes for the bad.

He is likely to have to accommodate himself to the following three changes.

- Change of Role e.g. from teacher to manager
- Change of Status e.g. from Senior Lecturer to Head of Department
- Change of Working Conditions in such areas as discretionary use of time, location, salary access to facilities (room, secretary, etc.).

When someone enters a new organisation they cross three boundaries which reflect three more areas of change.

Change of Function	He becomes part of a functional section of the organisation and acquires a set of tasks within that.
Change of Hierarchy	He acquires a position in the hierarchy.
Change of Group	He is included at some point in the network of informal groups.

Contrast. Unlike change which can be perceived by other people, contrast is experienced internally, and can only in part be anticipated in advance. What one person experiences as a contrast with his present job may not be what another newcomer experiences. It is a totally subjective process. One newcomer may be overwhelmed by differences in physical setting and the way in which people relate to each other; another newcomer entering the same job may not notice any of that but see a very great difference in pace of work and degree of supervision.

Surprise. We can define this as the difference between the expectations and the subsequent experiences of the new recruit, and his affective response to these. His response can be positive as well as negative - for example, finding people much more helpful than expected, or conversely finding the work much more boring than anticipated. Louis uses a three dimensional model to examine surprise.

One axis concerns the focus of expectations which can either concern oneself or the job and organisation.

A second axis concerns the mismatch between expectations and reality, which can either be over met or under met.

A third axis concerns the level of awareness of expectations, which can be conscious, tacit, or emergent.

Thus a newcomer's surprise can be located in one of 18 boxes on the model. One or two examples will illustrate the use of the model.

A lecturer might come into a college with clear ideas of what the job was going to be like, but finds that it does not match up to his expectations. His surprise is bounded by the dimensions Conscious/Job/Under met.

A lecturer takes on a job with much more responsibility because he thinks that is what he wants, but finds that in the event he does not like responsibility. His surprise is bounded by Unconscious/Self/Under met.

Another lecturer might accept a job and find a number of features unexpectedly distress him - he may not have realised how important a room of his own was. His unconscious job expectations are under met.

A fourth lecturer might have consciously worried whether he was really up to the job, and have found he was a great success - conscious/self/over met.

8. Sense-Making and Socialisation

The concept of surprise is important because the individual has to develop some cognitive process to deal with it. It is a common position among psychologists that most of the time we do not need active cognition to deal with the everyday world around us. We have developed ways of dealing with most of the minute by minute incidents in our life, that are virtually automatic or loosely pre-programmed. We have developed frameworks into which most events and experiences can be fitted. Abelson (1976) called such frameworks cognitive scripts, Kelly (1963) referred to personal constructs, Berger and Luckman (1967) to habitualisation, Bartlett to schemas. They all imply that conscious thought is not a very common part of our every day way of operating. We go to work, meet our colleagues, attend meetings, have meals, fill in forms, without any great attention or deliberate thought.

Occasionally, however, we have to cope with something unusual, unexpected or surprising, and then we are involved with conscious cognition rather than pre-programmed scripts. We work on assumptions of predictable sequences of events and outcomes, and it is only when there is a discrepancy between expected and actual outcomes that we are in trouble and have to start looking for some explanation. This retrospective explaining to ourselves of why things have gone haywire, is called sense-making, and is the basis of Festinger's well known theory of cognitive dissonance.

One of the occasions for sense making in organisations is the experience of surprise, and in making sense of such a situation or attributing meaning to it, the individual has available to him some sources of help. Past experience of similar situations is one such source: another is the general understanding of the way the organisation generally behaves, what Louis calls local interpretation schemes. He can also make use of the interpretations and ideas of other people around him and relevant information they may have.

Newcomers, however, are clearly at a disadvantage in dealing with surprise-creating situations. To insiders very little is likely to be surprising and when they do meet such situations, insiders generally have sufficient knowledge of how the organisation tends to work and what background factors may have influenced the decision, to come to some interpretation which is probably fairly

accurate or at least seems to make sense of the unexpected. The insider also has other insiders to talk to, comparing perceptions and responses to the situation. The newcomer, however, neither has such ready access to other colleagues' reactions, nor an understanding of how the organisation has worked over time. Yet the newcomer is going to experience many more instances of surprise than the insider. Not unnaturally, in his efforts to make sense of surprise, he often makes mistakes in attributing meanings to actions and events in the new organisation. He may attribute permanence to what are temporary situations, or personal malice directed at himself when it's just a supervisor letting off steam. Very often newcomers attribute meanings to unexpected events which are drawn from their previous experience in other settings.

9. Facilitating Socialisation

Some understanding of the socialisation process is important because it is the early experience of the newcomer that determines not only his future attitude to the organisation, but also whether he stays at all. Studies of recruit turnover are reviewed by Louis, and it is likely that turnover is related not only to under met expectations which has generally been held to be the prime factor (e.g. Ross and Zander, 1957), but also to an incapacity to deal with unexpected situations and surprises in relation to the new job, the new organisation, and the assumptions held about oneself. A key feature of planned socialisation processes should therefore be to provide the newcomer with support and help to deal with such surprises over the first few months. Formal induction processes at the start of his work life in the organisation are less important than support structures which are available as and when he needs them. It would be of value deliberately to create access to insiders and their local interpretation schemes by a pairing or proteges system, so that they can link into the capacity insiders have for making sense of the unexpected event.

10. Post Script

Nearly all summaries on socialisation refer to the dangers of over estimating the extent to which men can be moulded into the role and its setting. This over socialised conception of man, as Wrong (1967) described it has quite properly been criticised, but in using the perspective outlined above we are not identifying any particular end product into which the recruit is being socialised. We are simply stating that he will come to understand and be part of his bit of the organisation in a way that was not the case on his day of arrival. Schein (1971) has suggested that recruits respond in one of three ways to their section of the organisation. Firstly, custodial when they come to accept the status quo position; secondly, content innovatory, when they accept its broad aims but bring in new strategies and ways of

doing things; thirdly, role innovatory, when they do not accept its mission or broad aims. It is important to note, however, that the newcomer's bit of the organisation is not necessarily supportive of the organisation as a whole. It might be subversive or anti-organisational and that is what the newcomer is socialised into.

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